

LYDIA SIERRA CONSULTING

BUILDING CAPACITY, EXPANDING IMPACT

2025 Year in Review

Strengthening the organizations that strengthen communities.



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Thank





A Letter from Our Founder

Dear Friends and Partners,

Every year, the funding landscape becomes more complex.

Competition is increasing. Expectations are higher. Organizations are being asked to demonstrate measurable impact while navigating economic uncertainty, changing public priorities, and increasingly limited internal capacity.

This year reinforced something we've believed from the beginning: successful fundraising isn't simply about writing stronger proposals. It's about building stronger organizations.

At Lydia Sierra Consulting, our role is to help clients think strategically about growth, build organizational capacity, develop long-term funding strategies, cultivate meaningful funder relationships, and translate ambitious ideas into compelling investment opportunities. Sometimes that means writing a proposal. Just as often, it means helping an organization build the strategy, systems, and relationships that make transformational funding possible.

Over the past year, we've had the privilege of working alongside extraordinary nonprofit leaders who are expanding access to healthcare, preserving affordable housing, advancing environmental justice, supporting young people, strengthening neighborhoods, and improving quality of life in communities across the country.

As our firm continues to grow, our mission remains unchanged: to strengthen the organizations that strengthen communities.

Thank you for trusting us to be part of that journey.

Lydia Sierra
Founder & CEO, Lydia Sierra Consulting



Executive Summary

In 2025, Lydia Sierra Consulting (LSC) transformed a modest investment of \$858,773 into a staggering \$8,240,386 in funding secured for our clients, achieving an **859.55% return on investment** for community-based organizations!

"You gave us hope!"

—**Liza Austria-Miller**,
Co-Founder/ Co-
Executive Director,
UpBeat NYC

With a **48% success rate in grant acquisition**, we've strengthened our bonds with funders, aligning our shared values for justice, equity, and community empowerment.



"Working with my team feels like therapy: they listen, support, and guide me, and I always feel like I'm their only client."

—**Darnell Benoit**,
Executive Director,
Flanbwayan Haitian
Literacy Project

Over the past five years, we've helped our clients secure more than **\$47 million** in funding to advance their missions and strengthen communities.



A Different Kind of Partnership

Our clients don't come to us because they need another grant writer. They come to us because funding decisions increasingly require strategy, systems, and institutional readiness—not just compelling proposals.

Our work sits at the intersection of organizational strategy and fund development, helping clients build capacity and pursue transformational funding opportunities with confidence.



Clients partner with us to:

- Develop long-term funding strategies.
- Navigate increasingly complex funding landscapes.
- Build sustainable fund development tools, assets, and systems.
- Position transformational initiatives for investment.
- Identify, pursue, and secure high-impact funding.

Our goal is never to create dependence.

Our goal is to leave every client organization stronger than when we began.

We meet clients where they are—and help them build the systems, strategy, and confidence to pursue what's next.

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"What sets LSC apart is the depth and diversity of expertise behind every proposal. Their team brings together experienced fund development professionals with subject-matter expertise spanning fields like urban forestry, food policy, and public health, allowing them to engage meaningfully with program staff and quickly understand complex initiatives. They have an exceptional ability to facilitate collaboration across multidisciplinary teams and translate those conversations into compelling, rigorous proposals."

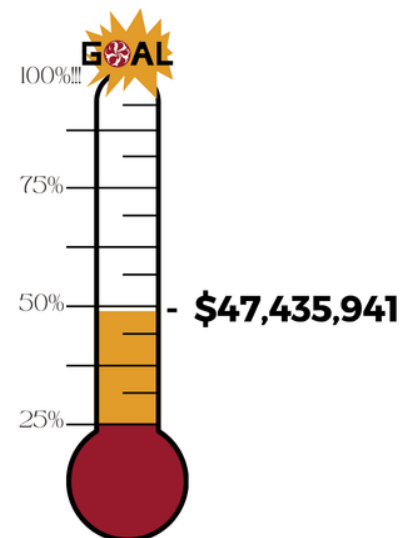
—**Siddhartha Sanchez**, Former Executive Director, Bronx River Alliance
Current Executive Director, NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy

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Trusted Across the Funding Landscape

In 2025, LSC secured funds from:

- Audax Charitable Foundation
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation
- Boston Foundation
- City Parks Foundation
- Communities First Movement CARE Fund
- Con Edison
- Cornelia T. Bailey Foundation
- CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG)
- Fidelis Care
- Find Your Light Foundation
- George B. Henderson Foundation
- Gilead Foundation
- Hyde and Watson Foundation
- Hispanic Federation
- Ira W. DeCamp Foundation
- Latinos United for Change (LUCHA) NYC
- Levitt Foundation
- Lilly Grants Office
- Ludcke Foundation
- M&T Bank Banking Partnership for Community Development
- Mabel Louise Riley Foundation
- Municipal Art Society of New York (MASNYC)
- Network for Landscape Conservation
- New York Community Trust (NYCT)
- New York Health Foundation
- New York Power Authority (NYPA)
- New York Women's Foundation
- New Yankee Stadium Community Benefits Fund
- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- NYS Department of State
- NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)
- NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)
- NYSCA (Support for Organizations)
- NYC Council Discretionary Funding
- NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) Cultural Development Fund
- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
- NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM)
- New York Pollution Prevention Institute
- Pinkerton Foundation
- Sarah K. de Coizart Perpetual Charitable Trust
- Sony Group Corporation Global Social Justice Fund
- Stevens Foundations
- Swedenborgian Church New York New Church Legacy Fund
- The Eisai USA Foundation
- Trefler Foundation
- Wade Trim Foundation
- Whole Cities Foundation



Lydia Sierra Consulting (LSC) is on a 10-year mission to raise \$100M for historically underserved urban communities by 2031.

Partnership in Action

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For more than two years, LSC has been far more than a grant writing partner. They quickly developed a deep understanding of Ellie Fund's mission and have become a trusted strategic thought partner—helping shape programs, strengthen grant narratives, and develop thoughtful budgets. Their collaborative approach has made them a valued extension of our development team.”

—**Danna Remen**, Director of Strategic Initiatives
Ellie Fund, a Massachusetts breast cancer support organization

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Translating Complex Ideas into Competitive Proposals for Bronx River Alliance

Throughout 2025, LSC partnered with Bronx River Alliance to pursue funding for highly technical initiatives spanning urban forestry, watershed restoration, green infrastructure, food systems, environmental justice, and climate resilience in the South Bronx. Working alongside ecologists, planners, educators, and community leaders, our role was to facilitate complex conversations, synthesize diverse information, and translate technical expertise and community knowledge into clear, compelling proposals aligned with funder priorities.

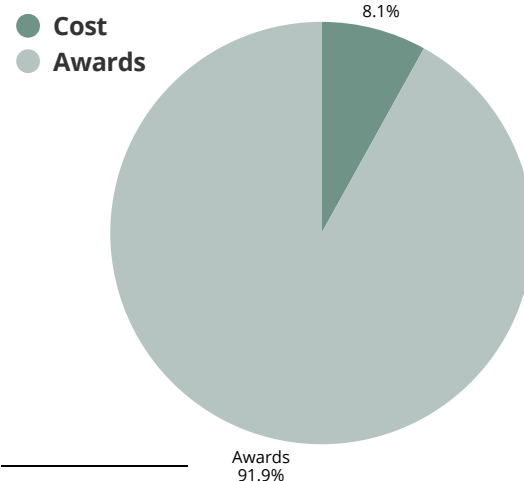
As funding opportunities become increasingly interdisciplinary, successful proposal development depends not only on strong writing, but on the ability to quickly understand the intersections between various fields and help organizations communicate their work effectively. Our team includes former nonprofit executives, public servants, urban planners, researchers, evaluators, and subject-matter specialists who bring practitioner experience to every engagement.

Building the Case for a One-of-a-Kind Public Food Forest

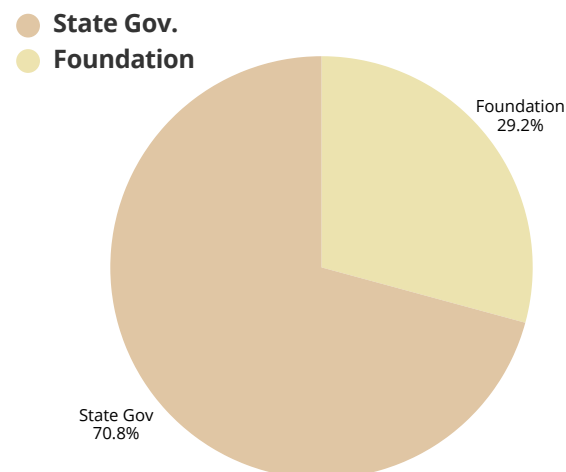
The Alliance stewards the Bronx River Foodway—NYC's first edible food forest in a public park—and has been working to expand funding for vital programming that shares cultural food practices and safe harvesting and food preparation techniques, increases fresh food access, and supports wellness in the South Bronx.

In 2025, LSC helped the Alliance substantially build out the Foodway's unique history, programming, and community impact language to secure \$60,000 from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and other sources, in addition to \$747,500 in grants from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation for restoration projects within the greater Bronx River Forest.

BxRA 2025 ROI



BxRA FUNDING BY SOURCE





Supporting Sustainable Growth for UpBeat NYC

Growth creates opportunity—but it also creates complexity.

Over the past five years, UpBeat has doubled the number of youth served annually through sustained music education, while expanding programming hours, instructional capacity, and public performances. Along the way, the organization has gained national recognition through features in *The New York Times*, NBC's *Today Show*, and NY1, bringing broader visibility to both UpBeat's work and the remarkable talent and spirit of South Bronx youth.

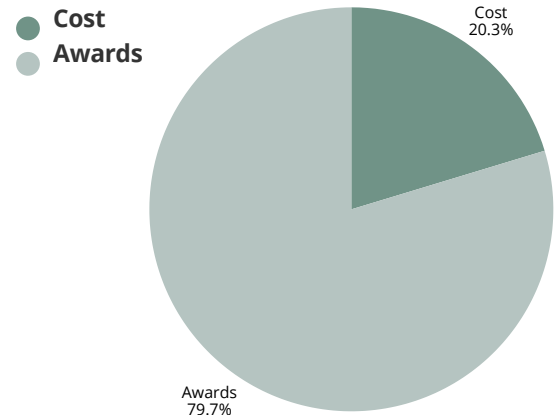
As UpBeat continued to grow, our partnership evolved beyond proposal development to help expand the organization's systems and infrastructure alongside its funding. Together, we explored realistic programmatic growth, considered staffing implications, developed tools for tracking outcomes, sequenced organizational expansion, and aligned fundraising priorities with long-term sustainability.

Rather than pursuing every available funding opportunity, we worked together to identify the investments that would best support UpBeat's long-term vision and organizational capacity.

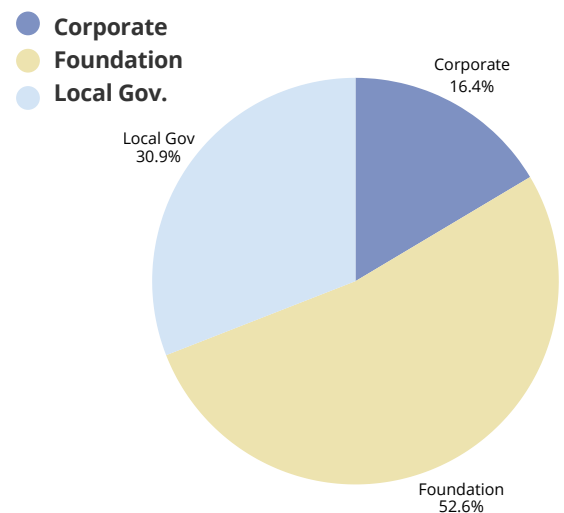
Our goal wasn't simply to secure more funding.

It was to ensure every new investment strengthened the organization in ways that will continue to serve the community for years to come, without compromising the values, culture, and relationships that made its success possible.

UB NYC 2025 ROI



UB NYC FUNDING BY SOURCE





Helping Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project Tell Its Story

When Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project began working with LSC in 2025, the organization already had a powerful story: two decades of trusted, community-rooted work with Haitian newcomer youth and their families navigating school, language, immigration, identity, and belonging in NYC.

Our role was to help Flanbwayan relate that story more fully to potential funders.

For young people entering a new country and one of the nation's largest public school systems, support often begins with school placement—but Flanbwayan's work extends far beyond enrollment. The organization provides academic tutoring, college and career guidance, leadership development, case management, legal and social service referrals, wellness activities, family support, cultural programming rooted in Haitian language and folklore, and opportunities to participate in campaigns advocating on behalf of education equity for immigrant youth.

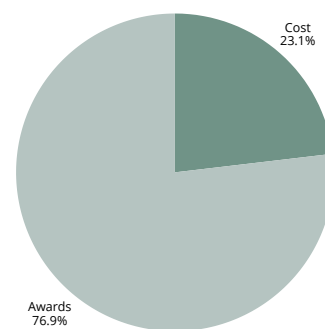
Together, we strengthened narratives that reflect the full scope of Flanbwayan's model: direct support that helps students stabilize and succeed, cultural programming that builds pride and belonging, and youth-led organizing that advances broader change for immigrant students. At a time of growing need, policy uncertainty, and funding challenges for immigrant-serving organizations, LSC helped Flanbwayan articulate not only what it does, but why this work matters now.

Small Investment, Immediate Impact

With only a few working devices available for 900 youth members, Flanbwayan students regularly had to share laptops while participating in tutoring sessions, completing homework, preparing for state exams, and accessing online school platforms. In 2025, LSC helped Flanbwayan secure a small grant from the Hyde and Watson Foundation to purchase 10 additional laptops. We built on that early success and secured an additional \$53,000 from the Hispanic Federation in 2026 to build out a fully equipped computer lab and digital learning hub for youth and their families, greatly expanding access to technology for low-income youth who often lack computers and reliable internet service at home.

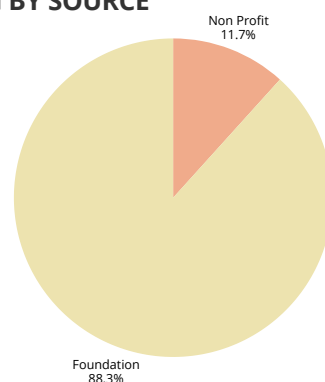
FHLP 2025 ROI

● Cost
● Awards



FHLP FUNDING BY SOURCE

● Nonprofit
● Foundation



Partnership in Action

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"LSC has been an exceptional partner to CCHP. Their team brings expertise, reliability, and a deep understanding of our mission to every engagement. What sets them apart is their ability to understand the heart of our work and translate it into compelling, thoughtful proposals that reflect our impact and vision. They are genuinely invested in our success and one of the strongest vendor partnerships we have had the privilege of working with."

—**Ann Mendelsohn**, Executive Director, Center for Comprehensive Health Practice, a Harlem-based community health center

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Helping NYC Business Improvement Districts Navigate Government Funding

In 2025, New York City was home to 76 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), nonprofit organizations that help strengthen and revitalize commercial districts across the five boroughs. Together, NYC BIDs support nearly 25,000 storefront businesses and provide supplemental services ranging from sanitation and public-space improvements to business support, marketing, events, beautification, and advocacy.



For many BIDs, government funding provides critical resources to expand their impact. But accessing and managing those dollars can require significant administrative capacity.

Many BIDs operate with lean teams and limited administrative staff. Without dedicated grants and contract management capacity, the responsibility for navigating complex government processes often falls directly on the Executive Director. Funding applications, contract registration, government portals, documentation, insurance requirements, reimbursement requests, reporting, changing agency processes, and persistent follow-up can quickly become a significant burden.

LSC provides specialized government funding and contract management support tailored to the needs of each BID. For NYC Council discretionary funding, our work can begin with developing and submitting the funding proposal and, when contracted, continue through contract registration, reimbursement, reporting, and closeout. Our contract management work includes PASSPort, contract packages, scopes of work and budgets, required documentation and insurance, reimbursement requests, reporting, and ongoing communication and follow-up with City agencies.



Helping NYC Business Improvement Districts Navigate Government Funding Cont.



We also manage government contracts supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration and New York State, helping BID clients navigate the different requirements, systems, and processes associated with multiple public funding sources.

BID, and Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership. Our work ranged from securing new government funding to providing ongoing contract management. For HUB Third Avenue BID, LSC developed and submitted its first NYC Council discretionary funding request, resulting in a **\$50,000 award.**

By providing specialized capacity that smaller organizations may not be able to maintain internally, LSC helps BID leaders navigate government funding without becoming experts in every funding system and contracting process.

The result is simple but important: **Executive Directors can spend less time navigating bureaucracy and more time supporting local businesses, strengthening commercial corridors, and leading the communities they serve.**

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“I highly recommend Lydia Sierra Consulting (LSC). They are not only a pleasure to work with, they bring results! LSC listened to my priorities and exceeded all goals in a shorter timeframe than anticipated.”

—**Amanda Zenteno**
Executive Director,
Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership

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How the Practice of Fund Development Is Changing



Strategy Comes Before Writing

The strongest proposals begin long before an application is released.

Increasingly, successful organizations are investing in strategic fund development planning, prospect research, relationship cultivation, systems building, and internal coordination months—or even years—before pursuing major funding opportunities. Proposal writing remains important, but it is no longer the primary determinant of success.



Partnership Is Becoming the Competitive Advantage

Funders are investing in organizations, not simply projects.

Leadership alignment, financial systems, evaluation capacity, implementation planning, and cross-functional collaboration all influence funding decisions. Building these systems has become just as important as producing compelling narratives.

Organizations that invest in capacity are positioning themselves to compete successfully for increasingly complex public and private funding opportunities.



Technology Changes. Judgment Endures.

Artificial intelligence is transforming fund development—but not in the way many expected.

While AI can accelerate research, synthesis, and technical analysis, competitive proposals still depend on strategic judgment, subject-matter expertise, careful evidence review, authentic organizational voice, and deep partnership with clients.

Over the past year, LSC developed formal internal protocols governing responsible AI use. Rather than replacing thoughtful proposal development, these practices strengthen it—allowing our team to spend more time on strategic thinking, collaboration, and the rigorous analysis that produces stronger funding opportunities for our clients.

At the same time, we've continued investing in proprietary prospect research systems and funding intelligence that help clients identify, prioritize, and cultivate high-value opportunities more strategically. Technology is most powerful when it strengthens—not replaces—expert judgment and long-term relationship building.

Growing Alongside Our Clients

The challenges facing nonprofit organizations continue to evolve.

So do the opportunities.

As funders place greater emphasis on organizational capacity, collaboration, and long-term impact, successful fundraising will increasingly depend on thoughtful strategy—not simply stronger proposals. Organizations will need partners who understand how to build both.

That is the future we're building toward.

And we're excited to continue building it alongside our clients.

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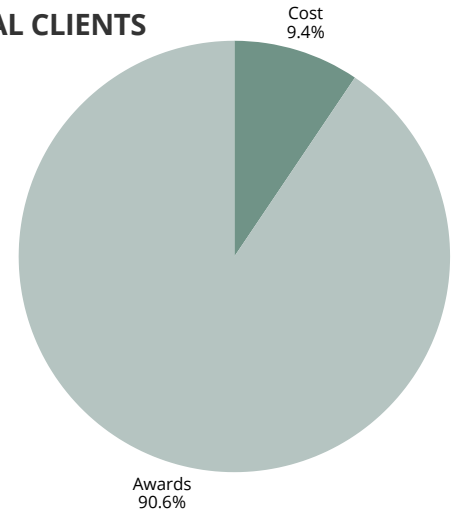
"What I admire most about LSC is their ability to take a simple, nascent idea and transform it into a winning proposal. Across our work together, I've watched them secure millions in funding for under-resourced communities of color by turning small conversations into life-changing resources."

—**Javier Lopez**
Founder, Real Time Response

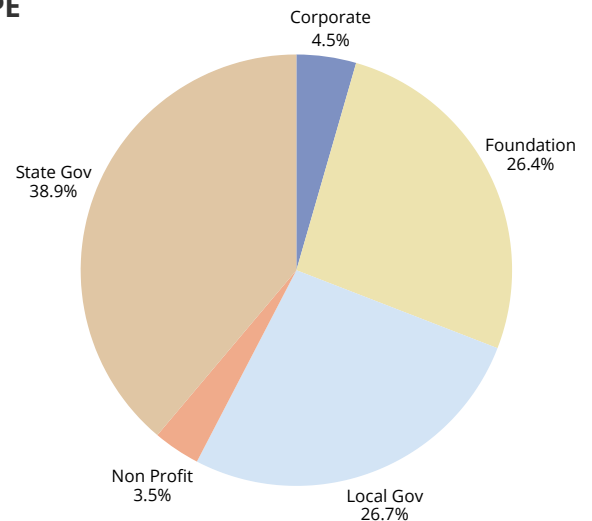
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ROI FOR ANNUAL CLIENTS

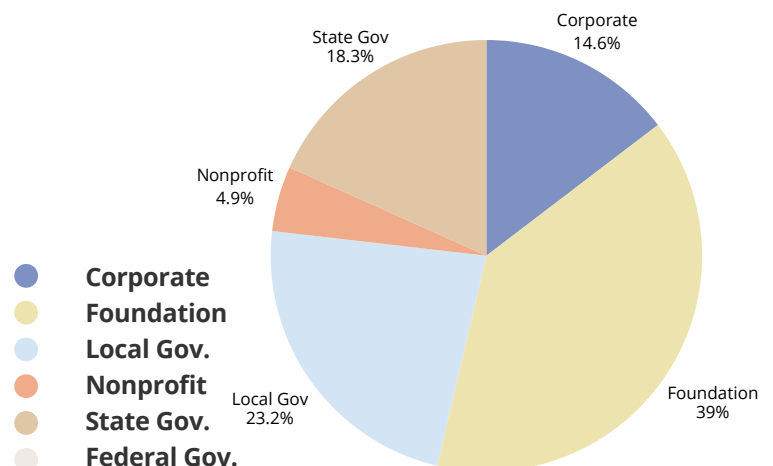
● Cost
● Awards



% OF FUNDING AWARDED BY FUNDER TYPE



% OF GRANTS AWARDED BY FUNDER TYPE



A Shared Purpose



Funding doesn't build strong organizations. Strong organizations attract transformational funding. Our role is to help clients build both.

We're honored to partner with organizations building healthier, more equitable, and more resilient communities.

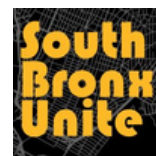
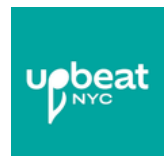
Thank you for trusting us with your vision.

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"Working with LSC has been extremely helpful to me as an Executive Director. They understand the type of community-based work we do, they listen carefully, and quickly pick up on new concepts. They've been extremely flexible in customizing support to fit our needs, and helped us pursue opportunities we simply wouldn't have had the capacity to undertake on our own."

—**Alexa Kasdan**, Executive Director, Pratt Center for Community Development

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